

1. Join a professional organization

Teaching can be a lonely occupation. Connect yourself to a network of people who do what you do and who share your concerns. You'll usually receive newsletters and reduced fees at conferences as a benefit. But consider joining also as a way of lending strength to an organization that can speak up on behalf of immigrants' rights and educators' concerns!

TESOL is the international organization for ESL/EFL teachers with over 20,000 members. (Call 703-836-0774 for information, or go to their website <http://www.tesol.edu>). There are dozens of smaller, regional TESOL affiliates that you can join as well --your state probably has its own affiliate. And there are other organizations that might relate to the kind of work you do, so keep looking until you get connected!

2. Attend workshops and conferences

Even if you haven't joined an organization, you can still go to conferences, and there's no better way to meet fellow teachers, get some inspiring ideas and see ESL books and materials on exhibit. (Note: if you only want to see the book exhibit, some larger conferences will sell you an exhibit pass for a reduced fee.) If you can't make it to a conference, try at least to attend some teachers' workshops. Most school districts and community colleges offer training sessions or workshops you can attend. But don't limit yourself just to ESL! You can get good teaching ideas from other areas as well.

3. Start your own support group

Find some fellow instructors who are willing to meet occasionally or have lunch together for the purpose of exchanging thoughts and ideas. A long-term relationship with other teachers can be very beneficial! The members of your group don't have to be from the same school--in fact it some times works better if they are not.

4. Get online

If you have access to the Internet through work or through a commercial e-mail service, sign up for some discussion groups, called "lists." One that we know about is called TESL-L, which provides an opportunity to talk with thousands of ESL professionals internationally. To sign up for this list, go to <http://www.hunter.cuny.edu/~tesl-l/> You'll find information on what to do next.

A note of caution: This form of communication is addictive and can take up a lot of your time! You may want to get started during a school break.

5. Get a pile of catalogs

Finding just the right ESL materials for your students can sometimes be a challenge! Get yourself on the mailing list with lots of different publishers so you'll receive their ESL catalogs. You'll find it useful to have a library of catalogs to browse through when you need to.

Start with Addison-Wesley, Heinle & Heinle, Oxford University Press and Regents-Prentice Hall, but also seek out the smaller companies (like [Language Success Press](#)), as they often have great materials. And don't overlook literacy organizations as a source for materials --New Readers Press (Laubach) and Literacy Volunteers of America (LVA) both have extensive catalogs.

Note: Hands-on English published an updated list of ESL publishers and their addresses in the July/August 1997 issue (Vol. 7, No. 2).

6. **Get book distributors' catalogs**

To get your hands on ESL materials quickly, sometimes it's best to call a book distributor such as DELTA in Illinois (1-800-323-8270), ALTA in California (1-800-ALTA/ESL) or BOOKLINK in New Jersey (201-947-3471). They carry books from many different publishers (although not all) and can usually ship you your order in a couple of days.

There are millions of language activities you can do with plain 3x5 cards. Emily Thrush says she could happily teach English with nothing more than these cards and some markers or pens!

Some of their uses include: flash cards, concentration games, matching games, word order practice, pair work, information-gap activities, and on and on and on. (Pro Lingua Associates has two books with detailed descriptions of card activities--Index Card Games, and More Index Card Games.)

To read the full article go to http://www.eslmania.com/teacher/esl_teacher_talk/41_Helpful_Tips.htm

To be continually inspired get a subscription to Hands-on English

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Additional tips for teaching activities can be viewed at the ELT Resource library www.springinstitute.org/publications. "ABC's for Tutors: 26 Teaching Tips" by Shirley Brod gives additional classroom ideas.